

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Virginia*

*Paul J. McNulty
United States Attorney*

*Fountain Plaza Three, Suite 300
721 Lakefront Commons
Newport News, VA 23606*

*757/591-4000
FAX 757/591-0866*

NEWS RELEASE

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For Further Information Contact:
Beverly Hathaway at 757-441-6331

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the sentencing today of Seneca Jovon Colbert, age 26, of Atlanta, Georgia, to 324 months imprisonment, by United States District Judge Raymond A. Jackson in United States District Court in Norfolk, for conspiracy to obstruct commerce by robbery and use of a firearm in the commission of a crime of violence. He was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$1,655,767.50 to Zales Jewelry Stores; \$424,649.69 to Veri-Claim; and \$1,800.00 to Pawn Mart Inc.

On April 8, 2004, Colbert pled guilty to conspiracy to obstruct commerce by robbery and use of a firearm in the commission of a crime of violence. Colbert participated in the November 27, 2001, armed robbery of the Zales jewelry store in the Prime Outlets in Williamsburg, Virginia, where approximately \$986,573 in jewelry and \$700 in cash were taken. From July 31, 2001, through May 14, 2003, Colbert and a group comprised of several other individuals robbed a total of 17 jewelry stores, many of them located in outlet malls, and one pawn shop, along the eastern states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee.

The participants entered the stores brandishing handguns and demanded jewelry, cash and the store's video security tapes from the employees. In many instances, employees were locked inside storage rooms. The robbers always made quick getaways by emptying the display cases and carrying the contents inside shopping bags. Three of the robberies took place in Virginia, where, in addition to the Williamsburg robbery, Leesburg's Prime Outlets Zales store was robbed twice in January 2002. The approximate total value of the jewelry and cash taken is \$6,671,251.40. The investigation is continuing into the racketeering activities of the group.

United States Attorney Paul J. McNulty said: "This sentence ends the violent crime spree of a serial robber. Once again justice has been served and our citizens made safer."

The large-scale investigation is being conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and numerous other local police and sheriffs departments.

Assistant United States Attorneys Janet S. Reincke and Howard J. Zlotnick prosecuted the case for the United States.